God's Providence the Cities Safety.

A SERMON

Preached before the Right Houourable

The Lord Mayor

And COURT of

ALDERMEN

Of the CITY of

LONDON,

AT

GUILD-HALL CHAPPEL.

February the 24*th* 168$^{8}_{9}$.

By *THOMAS LYNFORD*, A. M. Rector of S. *Edmund's Lombard-street*, and S. *Nicholas Acons*.

LONDON,
Printed for *Walter Kettilby*, at the *Bishop's-Head* in St. *Pauls* Church-Yard. MDCLXXXIX.

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The Epistle Dedicatory.

To the Right Honourable

Sir JOHN CHAPMAN,

Lord MAYOR,

Of the CITY of

LONDON

And to the COURT of

ALDERMEN.

May it please your Lordship,

THE *Design of the following Discourse is to show the necessity of God's Providence for the preservation of any City or Government, and consequently to persuade the Members thereof to use their utmost endeavours, for the securing to themselves, the divine favour.*

If

The Epistle Dedicatory.

If any thing besides the usefulness and seasonableness of the Subject can make it acceptable to the World, it must be your Lordship's and the Court's kind approbation of it, in obedience to whose Commands it is now made publick by,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

humble Servant,

Tho. Lynford.

PSAL. 127. 1.

Except the Lord keep the City, the watchman waketh but in vain.

THE Deſign of this Pſalm is to illuſtrate and ſet forth the Providence of God, as concerning it ſelf in all humane Affairs whatſoever, whether they be thoſe of private or publick concern.

The mercies of the Lord are indeed over all his works, and all the minuteſt and moſt inconſiderable Beings have an intereſt in his care and circumſpection.

His immenſe and boundleſs Nature diffuſeth it ſelf through all the corners of the Earth, and by his immediate preſence, the whole frame of Beings is ſuſtained.

And notwithſtanding their natural tendencies to deſtroy one another, even inanimate things, things without life and ſenſe, although they know nothing of it themſelves, are by the Divine

influence directed to produce moſt noble ends and purpoſes.

But man being a Creature made after God's own image and likeneſs, and being every way ſo well qualified to promote his glory, it cannot but be ſuppoſed that God will, after a more particular manner, concern himſelf on his behalf, and in all the ſeveral circumſtances of his life, in all the ſeveral relations in which he ſtands to others, will lend him the aſſiſtence of his Almighty Power, towards the promoting his greateſt benefit and advantage.

And it is well for us that God is pleaſed thus to intereſt himſelf on our behalf; for conſidering the ſeveral deſigns and intereſts of mankind, conſidering that great variety of paſſions and affections which humane Nature is ſubject to, conſidering thoſe unforeſeen accidents which no humane skill can prevent, what peace, what ſafety can be expected without the ſuperintendency of him who knows how to manage all effects whatſoever as ſeemeth beſt to himſelf, to proſper us in all our undertakings, and to prevent any evil of what kind ſoever which he ſees otherwiſe likely to befall us.

We may make as good proviſion as we can for the ſecurity of our perſonal Eſtates and Fortunes, and for the welfare of our Families, but

except the Lord build the houſe, they labour in vain that build it. It is vain for you to riſe up early, to ſit up late, to eat the bread of ſorrows: for ſo he giveth his beloved ſleep. Lo children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward. We may contrive as wiſely, and be as induſtrious as it is poſſible for any in our circumſtances to be, for the preſervation of that Community, that City, to which we belong: And yet *except the Lord keep the City, the watchman waketh but in vain.*

Which words do at firſt view ſupply us with theſe three heads of diſcourſe,

I. That without God's care and protection, no Government can be ſafe.

II. That with it, it may.

III. That notwithſtanding the neceſſity of God's concurrence for the preſervation of any Society or Government, the members thereof muſt not be idle, but muſt themſelves uſe all neceſſary care for the preſervation thereof. Here is no forbidding the watchman to *wake*, although his *waking* can ſignifie nothing, unleſs God be preſent with his aſſiſtence, and thinks fit to crown all his endeavours with ſucceſs.

I begin with the First, That without God's care and protection no Government can be safe. *Except the Lord keep the City, the watchman waketh but in vain.*

Government is so great a blessing to mankind that nothing can be a more proper object of God's care and inspection. The world without it would be full of nothing but Disorder and Confusion; and therefore it cannot but be agreeable to God's infinite Wisedom, more particularly to concern himself for its welfare.

We cannot but observe what mischiefs oftentimes ensue upon every change and alteration, and how difficult a matter it is, when once a Government is broken in pieces, to set it right again, to the satisfaction of those who are to live under it.

But were it not for the superintendency of one who has the reigns of Government in his hands, and to whom all inferiour causes are subservient and do administer as he thinks fit to direct, such alterations would be much more frequent, and the evil consequences which attend them far greater than we observe them now to be: As will best appear if we consider,

1. The ignorance of some.

2. The wicked and and malicious designs of others.

3. The

3. The want of power in all to furnish sometimes what may be absolutely necessary for the preservation of any City or Government.

First then, man's ignorance is the reason why no Government can be safe without the Providence of God.

So intricate and obscure are oftentimes the means upon which the preservation of any Government does depend, that great prudence and foresight is necessary for the discovery of what may be usefull upon any exigence or turn of affairs. Many men cannot foresee dangers so well as others, nor contrive to prevent them when they are foreseen.

When there is a necessity of coming to some speedy resolution upon any present emergency, some have not that skill as to be able on the sudden to resolve wisely; and although the means that are requisite for any Government's safety should be before them, yet they know not how to make a discreet choice, but oftentimes make use of what does the Government mischief instead of doing it good.

Upon which, and the like accounts, God's Providence is absolutely necessary, either for the setting up of wise Governours, or for the imprinting such things upon their minds, as do very much promote the welfare of any Society,

and

and which, without ſuch impreſſions from him, they never could have come to the knowledge of.

The wiſeſt Politicians we obſerve are often deceived; and they who pretend to the greateſt skill in the management of humane affairs, do now and then make uſe of ſuch means as do directly tend to the deſtruction of thoſe deſigns they have in hand.

And it is well for the World that it thus happens; for were not humane Nature thus liable to be impoſed upon, what would not wicked men, when in power, doe?

But God be thanked, they oftentimes through ignorance do take ſuch meaſures as are moſt contrary to that intereſt which they would promote.

And thus it likewiſe fares with good men too, who although they never deſign any thing but the real benefit of that Government to which they belong, are oftentimes guilty of ſuch miſtakes as do really further its deſtruction, and conſequently have need of ſome aſſiſtence from above to direct them in the knowledge of what is neceſſary for the preſervation of it.

Such is God's infinite wiſedom and knowledge, that he at one view ſees all the Cauſes

upon

upon which the Safety of any City or Commonwealth depends, and therefore if he thinks fit to contrive that they who are the Governours thereof ſhall know them too, all things will ſucceed well.

If he is pleaſed ſo far forth to enlighten their Underſtandings, that they may be able clearly to diſcern what does moſt conduce to the welfare of that Society over which they preſide, that Society has great reaſon to hope, that every thing may be managed to its greateſt advantage.

But unleſs he is pleaſed thus to lend his aſſiſtence, conſidering humane weakneſs, and the many errours which the moſt judicious are ſometimes liable to fall into, *Unleſs the Lord keep the City, the Watchman waketh but in vain.*

And thus it muſt happen when we conſider 2
in the ſecond place, the malitious and wicked deſigns of ſuch as are enemies to the peace and happineſs of any eſtabliſhed Government.

Some are of that factious temper that they take delight in embroiling the affairs of any Nation, and are never eaſie within themſelves, but when they are giving diſturbance to others. Such is their reſtleſs humour, that nothing pleaſeth them long; they are ever rolling from one deſign to another; and although things

things are never ſo well ſettled, they ſtill love alterations for alterations ſake.

Others are proud and ambitious Lovers of power and authority, and theſe care not what miſchief they project, if they can but thereby advance themſelves. Such as theſe are ſo intent upon honours and preferments, and the gratification of their covetous deſires, that it will never trouble them to ſee any Government turned topſie turvie, if they prove but any ways gainers thereby.

Add in the third place, beſides the ignorance, the ſloth and careleſneſs of ſuch as ſit at the helm, and who ſhould endeavour as much as they can to provide for the Peace and Safety of any City or Government, thoſe are placed there ſometimes who undermine what they ought to protect, and leaping over all the laws and boundaries of the preſent eſtabliſhment, invading all the rights and privileges of thoſe over whom they rule, are for modelling every thing as their own paſſions and prejudices ſhall direct.

Now where deſigns are carried on by ſuch ill men, for the ruine of any State, what can prevent it oftentimes but the Almighty power of him who breaks the power of the ungodly in pieces and makes their devices to come to no effect.

When

When we obſerve how intent ſome men are upon miſchief, and with what ſecreſie, and how far they carry on their plots and conſpiracies againſt a State; when we reflect upon the Authority and Intereſt of others, who are many times barefac'd in deſigning the ruine thereof, unleſs we were ſure that there is a great God above, who manageth all affairs whatſoever as ſeemeth beſt to himſelf, who can eaſily detect the moſt ſecret purpoſes of ſuch as are enemies to the peace of *Sion*, who can entrap the wicked in the very ſnares they laid for others, and whenever he pleaſeth be avenged upon thoſe who have miſemployed the power and authority with which he had intruſted them; How could we help being affraid leſt the beſt eſtabliſh'd Government in the World ſhould be every moment tumbling about our ears, and that inſtead of living peaceably together in any Society, we ſhould be daily fighting and quarrelling with one another; and that the ſtrongeſt, and thoſe who had moſt craft and knavery, ſhould always be too hard for the more innocent, and thoſe of more juſt and honeſt Principles.

However honeſtly zealous ſome men may be to preſerve a State from ſinking, although they ſhould imploy all their ſtrength and skill, ſhould hazard their lives and fortunes for the

Security of the lawfull Government under which they live, wicked men would be ſtill too hard for them, unleſs God was pleaſed to interpoſe ſometimes, and to give a bleſſing to their honeſt endeavours.

Wicked men have indeed a great advantage in reference to the furth ring any deſigns they have in hand above thoſe who are upright, in that they never ſcruple the attempting any thing how wicked ſoever, for the accompliſhment thereof: They do not ſuffer themſelves to be tied up by any rules or laws, but act any thing, be it what it will, which they believe to be ſerviceable to the wickedneſs they have in hand: They break oaths and promiſes, although never ſo ſolemly made: They invent and diſperſe a thouſand falſe ſtories, on purpoſe to delude and impoſe upon innocent and harmleſs people: They threaten and terrifie others into a compliance with their wicked deſigns, by which and the like practices, they muſt oftentimes neceſſarily proſper in what they are about, unleſs prevented by the interpoſition of one who directeth their ſteps as ſeemeth beſt to his infinite Wiſedom and Goodneſs, and makes them bring about ends directly contrary to what had been by them intended. *Except the Lord keep the City, the watchman waketh but in vain.*

Thirdly,

Thirdly, The truth of this Aſſertion will far- 3
ther appear, if we conſider that ſeveral things, upon which the preſervation of any Government depends, are manifeſtly beyond the reach of humane power, and require a divine aſſiſtence in the management of them.

Beſides that the Safety of any Society depends upon the prudence and honeſty of thoſe who are the Members thereof, there are other natural cauſes which muſt likewiſe neceſſarily concur for the ſame purpoſe, or elſe ruine will oftentimes enſue.

Now theſe are wholly at God's diſpoſal, and no body can manage them for the good of any people but he alone: The fate of a Kingdom depends ſometimes on the life of a man: The Winds ſometimes blow ſafety, at other times ruine to a People: The very temperature of the Air does now and then help forward the deſtruction of a City. To go no farther than our ſelves; In the *Spaniſh* Invaſion, an hundred years ago, how favourable were the Winds to us, although contrary to our enemies, when they diſperſed and broke in pieces that invinble Navy, with which they came to deſtroy us? And how did the ſame Winds of late further that deliverance which you ſo much longed for. On the other hand, in that dreadfull Fire,

which consumed your Dwellings, how did the Dryness of the season, and the Wind which then was, concur to propagate and increase the Flames?

Abundance of such Instances there are where inanimate things and causes, things that have no life nor sense, no forecast nor design, are made the Instruments of Safety or Ruine to a Common-wealth.

And if it be so, how then can any such City or Common-wealth be at any time secure, unless he in whom is the Power of Life and Death, he whom the Winds and Seas obey, he who can abate the strength of natural causes, or increase it, as he sees fit, is pleased to concern himself so far as to prevent all the direfull effects which such natural causes are in themselves otherwise likely to produce.

Humane prudence, whatever it may doe in other cases, yet in such events as happen by any of the forementioned means, can have nothing to doe.

Not all the foresight in the World can alter the Temperature of the Air, or make the Winds blow out of one corner rather than out of another.

It is onely a Being of infinite Wisedom and Power which can change and alter these things as

as ſeemeth beſt to himſelf: And therefore ſince the welfare of whole Societies and Communities does often in a great meaſure depend upon ſuch things, without the aſſiſtence of God's providence, ſuch Societies and Communities muſt neceſſarily be daily expoſed to ruine and deſtruction. *Except the Lord keep the City, the watchman waketh but in vain.*

But although without the aſſiſtence of God's Providence no City or Government can be ſafe, yet with it it may, which is the ſecond thing which from the Text I purpoſed to diſcourſe of.

When the Pſalmiſt here aſſerts that, *the watchman waketh in vain unleſs the Lord keep the City*, he then ſuppoſeth that if *the Lord* does vouchſafe to *keep the City*, *the watchman* will not *wake in vain.*

Now this is ſufficiently manifeſt from what has been already diſcourſed: For if God is pleaſed to inlighten the underſtandings of ſuch as are ignorant, ſo as they may be able to take ſuch reſolutions as may tend to the Safety of any Nation or People: If he is pleaſed not to permit the wicked to proſper in what they are about, but thinks fit to detect and confound all their miſchievous devices; If he is pleaſed ſo far forth to exert his Power over all natural cauſes

as

as to make them ſubſervient to the preſervation of any City or Kingdom, what then has any ſuch City or Kingdom need to fear any dangers which can befall it? It is ſafe in God's hands, whoſe Wiſedom is ſufficient to foreſee, and whoſe Power is ſufficient to prevent any miſchiefs which can befall it.

We often reade in the Scriptures of God's *giving up* his People to be deſtroyed by their enemies, and of his threatning them with ruine and confuſion. All which plainly implies, that they were ſecure enough, untill he was pleaſed to withdraw his protection, and to permit ruine and deſtruction to fall upon them.

The Expreſſions in *Judges* are very remarkable for the evincing of this truth, *Judg.* 2. 14. *He delivered them into the hands of Spoilers, that ſpoiled them.* Judg. 3. 8. *He ſold them into the hand of the King of Meſopotamia.* Judg. 4. 12. *He ſtrengthned the hand of Eglon King of Moab againſt Iſrael.*

No miſchief can happen to any People or Government without God's leave and permiſſion. *Balaam* acknowledgeth ſo much, *Num.* 23. v. 8. *How ſhall I curſe whom God hath not curſed? or how ſhall I deſie whom the Lord hath not deſied?* Neither is any thing more manifeſt than that without a Commiſſion from God, the Devil him-

himself was not able to touch or harm righteous *Job*, chap. 1. 2.

Mark what God himself saith to *Senacherib*, 2 *King.* 19. 28. *I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way which thou camest: Thou shalt not come into this City, nor shoot an arrow against it.*

God's Power is mighty and uncontrollable, and as he can and does over-rule all natural Agents, so can he likewise over-rule all moral ones too, and whenever he pleaseth direct the actions of wicked men as seemeth best to his infinite Wisedom.

Let their intentions be never so devilish, he can abate their Pride, assuage their Malice, and confound their Devices. Let their Plots and Conspiracies be carried on with the greatest cunning and secresie imaginable, he can lay them open, and detect them. He can determine things after such a manner that, wicked men shall neither be able to rage so long nor so furiously as they had resolved to doe. Nay, sometimes he does wholly hinder the intended mischief from happening, and that either by cutting off those who are the Authours of it, as he served *Pharaoh* and his host; or by lessening their strength and power; as when he struck the *Sodomites* with blindness, or by opposing a

power

power ſufficient to ſuppreſs theirs, as when he ſubdued rebellious *Abſalom* by *David* and his Servants; or laſtly, by removing out of their way the Object of their ſpleen and malice, as when he ſent our Saviour into *Egypt*, and preſerv'd St. *Paul* from the fourty Conſpiratours.

Evil men do often proceed far, and ſeem to themſelves to be in an hopefull way of bringing their deſigns to paſs; and God, either for the puniſhment of others, or for the advancement of his Glory, by afterwards thwarting their intentions, or for ſome other reaſon beſt known to himſelf, does often allow and permit it, but notwithſtanding their great hopes of ſucceſs, he can, if he ſhall judge it neceſſary and convenient, in a moment blaſt all their moſt proſperous deſigns, and bring things about directly contrary to their expectations.

There may be great diſtractions in a Kingdome. The City which was once the envy of her Neighbours may have her rights and privileges invaded, her ancient Government ſubverted, may ſee the Calves of *Dan* and *Bethel* ſet up within the corners of her ſtreets, and be full of fears and jealouſies, leſt a ſudden deſtruction ſhould fall upon her and her inhabitants. And yet if God's providence has not forſaken that Kingdom, if he ſtill keeps that City,

all

all the contrivance of man can never prevail against it.

It is founded upon a rock, and although the flouds may rise, and the streams beat violently upon it, yet they will not be able to overturn it. An unexpected deliverance shall be wrought for it, and God will manifest his power after an extraordinary manner in the preservation of those whom he vouchsafes to preside over: All their Adversaries shall consume away, perish, and come to a fearfull end; but their endeavours shall be blest with prosperity and great success.

The Third thing which I propoſed to discourse of from the Text is, that notwithstanding the necessity of God's concurrence for the preservation of any Society or Government, the Members thereof must not be idle, but must themselves use all necessary care for the preservation thereof. *The watchman* is not forbidden to *wake*, although all signifies nothing unless the Lord keep the City.

God has not made Men rational Creatures to no purpose, nor because he is able to doe all things for them, is he willing that they should do nothing themselves: He has given them understandings for the finding out of Truth, and for the enabling them to make a distinction

betwixt things evil and good. He has given them a power of chuſing ſuch means as are fit and proper for their preſent circumſtances, and how can they better employ theſe faculties, than in the preſervation of publick Societies, and for the peace and quiet of others, as well as of themſelves. And therefore to hide theſe talents in a Napkin, and to depend wholly upon God's Providence, in caſe of difficulty and danger, is to tempt God to withdraw his protection, and to run the hazard of having the City ruined, inſtead of being preſerved by him.

There is a cloſe connexion betwixt Cauſes and Effects, and they who are diligent in their ſearch after the former, may have the latter ſucceed according to their wiſhes.

For although ſuch is the dimneſs of our underſtandings, that we may be often miſtaken, although God does always reſerve to himſelf a right of interpoſing in all our affairs, and of diſappointing us in what we undertake, yet this onely happens in ſome caſes. God's Providence does uſually concur with Man's Endeavours, and he will never hinder us in what we are about, unleſs it be for his own glory, our good, or the good of others. And therefore as if there was no ſuch thing as God's Providence in the world, we are bound to employ all our care and induſtry

duſtry for the welfare of that Community to which we belong, and then leave the event to him who manageth all concerns after the wiſeſt manner.

For us, even for the ſake of the publick, to trample under foot the Laws of God, this, beſides the great ſcandal it brings upon our moſt holy profeſſion, is the way to ſet the Almighty againſt us; ſo that nothing we doe ſhall proſper: But on the other hand, it is too much preſumption to ſit idle, and to hope and wiſh that God will ſave the City, when we will doe nothing to ſave it our ſelves.

All things, it is true, are to be referred to God, who gives us prudence to chuſe ſuch means as are fit for the preſervation of any Government, that ſhows the way to come at ſuch means, who puts us in poſſeſſion of them; and removes all obſtacles in our way to them. But ſtill it muſt be ſuppoſed, that we then onely ſhall obtain them, when by the aſſiſtence of God we doe as much as in us lies for the obtaining of them.

Although Miracles may not be ceaſed, yet they have no reaſon to expect them who will doe nothing of themſelves without them: And if the watchman will ſleep, if the City be taken, or any miſchief happens to it, it is his fault

and not God's, whose Providence over it consists, in a great measure, in the care and prudence of such whom he makes use of, as instruments for the preservation of it.

What methods are necessary to be taken for the preservation of any Government, must be left to the judgment of every particular person therein concerned to determine: For circumstances alter, and some things may be fit and lawfull at one time which would be very irregular and unfit at another.

However let not the difficulties which every honest man in such a case will meet with deter him from the faithfull discharge of his duty, but as long as he is sincere in what he undertakes, and that when he pretends to design the welfare of the publick, he does really intend it; as long as he moves not out of that Station in which Providence has placed him; as long as he acts upon a Principle of conscience, and not to gratifie any particular passion, or to promote his private interest, let him always be doing, according to the best of his skill and judgment, what may defeat the attempts of wicked men against the safety of that Community, that City to which he belongs, what may tend to preserve Peace within its Walls, and Plentifulness within its Palaces.

There can be no hopes of ſecurity without man's induſtry, and when we make uſe of thoſe powers and faculties which God hath beſtowed upon us in the ſearch after what may be of greateſt benefit to the publick, we ſhall then have the greateſt reaſon to hope for a greater portion of God's aſſiſtence to procure it: But unleſs *the watchman doth wake*, there are no grounds to think that *the Lord* will himſelf alone *keep the City*.

Having done with the three Heads which from the words of the Text I propoſed to diſcourſe of, the Inferences I ſhall make are theſe two:

1. That in order to preſerve any City or Common-wealth, no man ought to place too much truſt and confidence in any of his own endeavours.

2. That to preſerve the City and Common-wealth in ſafety, it is of abſolute neceſſity to ſecure to our ſelves God's favour and protection.

First, In order to preſerve any City or Common-wealth, &c. The great Politicians of the World are too apt to value themſelves above meaſure upon the account of their own contrivances: They aſcribe the Safety of a Government to their counſel and advice, their

courage

courage and reſolution; and when any deſign which they have laid takes effect, how do they applaud themſelves upon the ſucceſs thereof; whereas it is plain, all their wiſeſt contrivances could have ſignified nothing, unleſs God had ſaid Amen to them; neither had their watchfulneſs over the City at all ſecured it, unleſs it had been under God's keeping as well as theirs.

Such dependence therefore upon their own zeal and care for the preſervation of any Community is very unreaſonable, ſince it is to depend upon what cannot in it ſelf preſerve it.

And as it is very unreaſonable, ſo I am ſure it is very dangerous too: For God, when he ſees men ſo forgetfull of him as rather to depend upon themſelves than upon his Providence, may on purpoſe blaſt all their honeſt deſigns for the Safety of that Community to which they belong, and ſuffer thoſe who have the vileſt purpoſes againſt it to proſper, even to the utter deſtruction thereof.

How is the City oftentimes, which vaunted it ſelf ſo much in its own greatneſs, which by reaſon of the number of its Counſellors, and the ſtrength of its Inhabitants, thought it ſelf ſo ſecure from danger, on the ſudden made deſolate, and all on purpoſe to wean mens minds from placing too much confidence in any thing

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that is humane, and to make them look up from thoſe ſecondary Cauſes unto him who is the ſupreme Cauſe of all things, and by whoſe direction they all move, as long as, and after what manner, he pleaſeth.

I have already preſſed the neceſſity of Care and Watchfulneſs in thoſe who ſtudy the Safety of any City or Common-wealth, but ſtill, after we have done our beſt in ſuch a caſe, we ought not to be ſo vain as to conſider our ſelves alone and ſeparate from the Superintendency of him upon whom the iſſue of all our wiſeſt contrivances depends.

If we have Succeſs in what we honeſtly undertake upon any ſuch account, we have reaſon enough to thank him for it, and therefore ought to empty our ſelves of all vain conceits concerning our wiſdom or ſtrength, or any thing elſe which may ſeem to contribute to the welfare of that Community which we are concerned for, and give him the glory thereof, whoſe Providence is always neceſſary to cooperate with man's Endeavours. *Except the Lord keep the City, the watchman waketh but in vain.*

Secondly, In order to preſerve any City or Common-wealth in Safety, it is of abſolute neceſſity to ſecure to our ſelves God's favour and protection. We ſee plainly that all outward

helps

helps can avail nothing without it: That let thoſe who are the Governours thereof project as well as they can for its Safety, ſome unlucky accident or other may ſtill fall out to diſappoint all their moſt hopefull contrivances, unleſs God is pleaſed to interpoſe and hinder it.

And therefore the main thing we have to doe in ſuch a caſe, is to engage God to be on our ſide, and this we muſt doe,

1. By frequent Prayer to him for his aſſiſtence.

2. By ſincere Endeavours of union with one another.

3. By an hearty Repentance for all our paſt tranſgreſſions, and a ſolemn Reſolution of amendment for the future.

Firſt, In order to ſecure God's favour and protection for the preſervation of any City or Government, it is neceſſary that we often pray unto him and beg his aſſiſtence; *In every thing*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *Phil.* 4. 6. *by prayer and ſupplication, with thanksgiving, let your requeſts be made known to God.* And more particularly in relation to Government, 1 *Tim.* 2. 1,2. *I exhort therefore that firſt of all ſupplications, prayers, interceſſions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men: For Kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godlineſs and honeſty.*

God

God requires that in all our wants and neceſſities we ſhould beg his aſſiſtence, not as if he did not know all our neceſſities before we preſented them to him, but becauſe Prayer argues ſuch a devout temper of mind, ſuch a dependence upon God, as does rightly qualifie the Petitioners to receive mercy from him. He loves to ſee his ſervants upon their knees, proclaming him to be the Giver of all good things, and acknowledging that they cannot be ſafe, unleſs he reacheth out his hand to ſave them.

And therefore to preſerve any City or Nation from danger and ruine, what can be more ſeaſonable than that not onely particular perſons, but whole families, whole congregations, fall down frequently before the Throne of Grace, humbly intreating God to ſpare his People, and not to ſuffer his Inheritance to be brought to Confuſion; earneſtly beſeeching *him* to give Peace in their days, becauſe it is he alone who fighteth for them, and who can make their enemies to be at peace with them.

We find in Scripture, *Exod.* 17. 11. that when *Amalek* and *Iſrael* fought, whilſt *Moſes* his hands were lifted up in prayer *Iſrael* prevailed, but when they were let down *Amalek* prevailed.

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ger, and it is for want of the same Devotion that he does not deliver it when it is.

One would think that to engage us in the performance of this Duty it were enough to consider the easiness of it, and the great honour which is done us; that we, who are but dust and ashes, should have leave given us thus to converse with the great God of heaven and earth; but when we consider the great benefit which hereby accrues to the World by our thus publishing our dependence upon him, and that God is desirous to be thus entreated to doe us good, this makes the obligation to the practice thereof to be much the stronger, and lays the misery of any calamities which happen to the publick at our doors, as caused by our neglect of it.

K. *David*, although the *Jewish* Government was at present very well settled under him, although there was an amicable correspondence betwixt Prince and People, and every one enjoyed his just rights and privileges without any trouble or disturbance, does however think fit to call upon all persons whatsoever to join with him in their Petitions for the Safety of the present Establishment, *Psal.* 122. 6. O *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee*, as knowing well enough that without

the Almighty's kindneſs, there could be no ſecurity that things would always ſo continue. How quiet ſoever they were at preſent, he was ſufficiently aware that there might be Invaſions from abroad, and Rebellions at home: That if things ſhould continue peaceable during his Reign, yet that they might not doe ſo in the Reign of his Succeſſours: And therefore to ſecure and perpetuate to them that Peace and Tranquillity which they then enjoyed, he earneſtly exhorts his People to make their Addreſſes unto him for his protection, who holds the reigns of all Government in his hands, who pulleth down one, and ſetteth up another, who overturns whole Empires when they ſeemed moſt firmly ſettled, and cauſeth great alterations in a Kingdom, when it was leaſt expected.

We have ſufficiently ſeen, from what has been diſcourſed, that after the moſt prudent Politicians have contrived the beſt they can for the ſecurity of any State, ſome unexpected Accident or other may intervene, to blaſt all their moſt hopefull Projects, and to unhinge and ſubvert that Government which they ſo much labour to preſerve, unleſs he *by* whom *Kings reign, and Princes decree juſtice*, is pleaſed to lend his helping hand for the defence thereof.

Before then we engage in any deſign for the ſake of the publick, let us earneſtly beg God to proſper it: Before we go about to prevent the evils we foreſee coming upon it, let us humbly beſeech him to avert them. Even when we are upon our guard for the Safety thereof, and do think we have a good ſettlement, let us implore his aid for the preſervation thereof.

If we are not for Changes and Commotions in the City, but would fain have things kept in their true ſtation, and no Encroachments made upon the Rights of others; let us humbly intreat the great God of Heaven and Earth, that he will be pleaſed to ſubdue the Paſſions of unruly men, will diſcover and defeat all the wicked Contrivances of ſuch as are enemies to Peace; and by the influence of his Holy Spirit diſpoſe all ſuch as are in authority to rule with gentleneſs and prudence, as well as thoſe who are ſubjects to pay a chearfull obedience to all their juſt commands: This being the ſureſt way to beſpeak his kindneſs, who is always ready to hearken to the devout Petitions of ſuch as make their neceſſities known unto him, eſpecially in an affair which is ſo worthy the cognizance of ſo great a Being as God is.

Secondly, In order to ſecure God's favour and protection for the preſervation of any City

or

or Community, we ought to be kindly affected towards one another. There is nothing more pleasing to God than Peace and Unity: This is what our Saviour with so much earnestness urged upon his Disciples: This is what resembles the heavenly State above, where all live calmly and in perfect amity one with another: Nay, this is what resembles even God himself, whose Nature is one, and who is always at Unity within himself: So that by how much the Members of any Society are kindly affected towards one another, and do mutually endeavour to promote each the other's satisfaction, by so much are they the better qualified to receive the divine Influence for the furthering all such honest designs as are for the preservation of that Society unto which they belong.

A house divided against it self cannot long *stand*, and yet stand it might, if God thought fit to hinder it from falling: But Divisions cause God to withdraw the light of his Countenance from a People, so that they soon crumble into pieces, and batter and destroy one another.

When, instead of putting an end to all quarrels and contentions, men are so malitious as to renew ancient discontents, and to foment new ones: When, instead of consulting the Interest of the publick, they are striving to gratifie their

own

own private Piques and Animosities, instead of forgiving one another as they ought, they are wholly intent upon revenge; it is no wonder if God leaves such a People to themselves, so as being deprived of his necessary assistence for their preservation, they do even perish, and come to a fearfull end.

So that they who would move the Almighty to take any Nation into his particular care, ought to show him in themselves something of that peaceable temper which is so gratefull to him, and which he is always wont to accompany with his Grace and heavenly Assistence.

He that loves not his Brother (saith the Apostle) *whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen.* And if a man be not rightly affected towards God, if he loves him not, how can he expect any favour or protection from him.

Let them then who would have God to bless their Endeavours for the preservation of any Government with success, be sure to lay aside all malice and ill nature, to forget all former affronts and injuries, and to endeavour, as much as in them lies, to live peaceably with all men.

Let them frequently consider, that they are all of the same parentage, having God for their Father:

Father? That they are all redeemed by the bloud of the same Jesus? That they have all the same Natures and Faculties, the same Affections and Inclinations, the same Hopes and Expectations, that they all stand in need of one another's Assistence, in order to make them live comfortably in this world; and let the Consideration of these and the like Arguments move them to be kindly affected towards one another, and to love one another.

Men may differ from one another in Opinion, and it is what cannot be helped, but their Quarrelling and being Angry one with another, that may.

All men have not such clear Apprehensions of things, as never to assent to any thing but the Truth: Their Understandings are not so good as other mens are; so that they may be often imposed upon as to the opinions which they have taken up.

But all agree, and know well enough what it is to doe as we would be done by; what it is to hate one another, what it is to revile, abuse and harm one another.

These things the meanest capacity is well enough acquainted with, and these are things upon which either the Happiness or Ruine of a Society depends.

If

If we are of an affable, courteous temper, and do desire to live friendly with one another, and to doe one another all the good we can, we do thereby, after a more particular manner engage God to be our friend, we invite his blessed Spirit, to take up his dwellings amongst us, and to direct and influence all our endeavours for the preservation of that Society of which we are Members: But if we are of a peevish, an ill natured disposition, and care not what injuries, what affronts we offer to one another, we drive away the Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of Peace, from taking up his abode amongst us, we put our selves out of the protection of him, without which no City, no Government can be safe.

And this is what I heartily wish might be seriously considered by us, at this time more especially.

Several opportunities we have had formerly of uniting together, and of closing those breaches which have unfortunately been made amongst us; but still, whether by the cunning of our old, inveterate Adversaries, or by our own folly we have kept at a distance, and instead of joyning together for the preservation of us all, have mutually exasperated and endeavoured to ruine one another.

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We ſeem now to have another opportunity put into our hands, of healing thoſe wounds which have been kept a long time open: God grant that the heats of ſome (to give it no worſe name) be not the cauſe, that inſtead of pouring Oil into our wounds, we fall to tearing them wider, and making them bleed afreſh.

All wiſe and honeſt Men ſeem willing to forget and to forgive, and by mutual condeſcenſions, to come as near one another as it is poſſible for them to come: And if the obſtinacy of ſome, the Waſpiſhneſs and Malice of others, the Ambition of others, do not hinder it, we may hope to ſee matters amicably compoſed, and an happy Union begun amongſt us.

But if inſtead of putting an End to all ancient Quarrels, and Contentions, we endeavour to revive them. If paſt Miſcarriages are aggravated afreſh, and new Diſcontents heightned: If when God by his late Kindneſs to us, ſeems to have forgiven us our Treſpaſſes, yet we will not forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us, but like that unmerciſull Servant in the Goſpel, (whom his Lord had forgiven his whole debt,) are ſtill for taking one another by the Throat, ſaying, *pay me that thou oweſt me*, what can be expected but that God ſhould give ſuch an uncharitable People up to follow their own inventions, and if

he does ſo, that will be a Judgment ſevere enough, and we ſhall ſoon be brought to deſtruction by our own Diviſions.

When once Parties are well heated, they never matter what becomes of the Publick, but are ready to catch at every thing, how deſtructive ſoever to the whole Community, if it does but help to gratifie their own revenge.

Oh then that we did but know, at leaſt in this our day, the things which belong unto our peace, before they are hid from our eyes!

Oh that we could endeavour ſeriouſly to be of a meek and lowly mind, a humble and charitable Diſpoſition!

That we could be willing to ſacrifice private reſentments to publick good, and as the Apoſtle adviſeth, *Col.* 3. 12, 13. *to put on as the Elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindneſs, humbleneſs of mind, meekneſs, long-ſuffering, forbearing one another, forgiving one another!*

Theſe things in themſelves naturally tending to promote the preſent happineſs of any People, and being likewiſe one of the beſt methods we can take to engage him who is a God of Peace and Order, to lend us his aſſiſtence for the furthering of it.

Eſpecially if, in the Third and Laſt place, we add thereunto a ſincere repentance for all Sins

paſt,

paſt, and firm reſolutions of amendment for the time to come.

God has a peculiar regard to what befalls whole Cities and Communities, becauſe as they are Societies, they are onely capable of Rewards and Puniſhments in this life: They are diſſolved by death; and although God will then deal with the particular members thereof according to their deſerts, yet they cannot be ſo dealt with as a Body united under Laws and Government. And therefore God calls Cities and Commonwealths to preſent judgment, and exerts his Power either in their preſervation or ruine, according as he finds it moſt neceſſary for his Glory and for the general benefit of the World.

When he finds any People to behave themſelves dutifully towards him, he then ſhowres down Bleſſings of all ſorts upon them; and on the other hand, when he finds them to continue in their obſtinacy againſt him, he then oftentimes brings a ſudden deſtruction upon them. And thus we obſerve God to have particularly ſhown himſelf with reſpect to the *Jews*: Great mercies he beſtowed upon them, but they abuſed his mercies, and notwithſtanding his great kindneſs, rebelled againſt him. Upon this he ſent his Judgments amongſt them, to

consume them, but upon their repentance he turned from his heavy wrath, and received them again into favour. And so all along, as was their behaviour, so was his dealings with them.

It is Sin and Iniquity alone which brings a City into danger: It is this alone which makes God withdraw the light of his countenance from any People, and what can then befall them but misery and confusion?

God is very loth to doe this: It is called in Scripture his *strange work*; and he does not love to be ingaged in it, but to keep up his Authority in the World, to manifest his infinite Wisedom and Power in such admirable Events as are upon such occasion by him produced; and to discourage all sinfull practices, it is necessary that he should doe it sometimes, but it is onely then that he forceth himself to doe it, when any People continue obstinate in their wicked courses, notwithstanding all the methods which have by him been used for their amendment.

He warns them time after time of their follies, and by kind invitations, by the memory of past mercies, by threats and promises, endeavours to reclaim them; and it is not untill they have wearied his patience and forgiveness that he signs their doom. If

If then we have any kindness for that City, that Kingdom unto which we belong, don't let us any longer give countenance to those Sins which are the onely incentives of God's wrath against any Kingdom or People. Let every one search narrowly into his own breast, and there make a strict enquiry, what Lusts are yet unmortified, and let him be sure immediately to bring them forth and slay them before the Lord.

Don't let any pretend, What will it signifie for me to be reformed when there is so general a corruption of manners throughout the whole Nation?

We know when God was about to destroy *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, how small a number of righteous persons would have saved those Cities.

Every sincere Penitent damps the fury of God's anger, and by every one's beginning to amend his own ways, a general Reformation must necessarily in time follow.

Let no excuses then make us defer our Repentance one moment longer; but let us go home every one from hence with a firm purpose of heart to amend whatever is amiss in us. This being the onely way to engage the Almighty to take care of us, and to doe us good.

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We are all ſenſible enough that the City has been in great danger, neither can we yet ſay, that it is ſo ſafe as we could wiſh. Great diſtractions have been in the Kingdom, and there is ſtill many an aking heart and ſolicitous thought amongſt us, and will be untill things be more and more ſettled to the Nation's contentment.

The onely way I know of for us to endeavour to ſettle them according to the beſt of our skill is, to break off thoſe Sins which cauſed God to permit ſuch diſorders to happen amongſt us.

We are indeed in hopes of having all things ſucceed well with us for the future, and of having that deliverance which has been wrought for us perpetuated to us, but all will depend upon our behaviour: For although God has delivered us from the Evils that threatned us, yet if ſuch a deliverance has not had ſuch an influence upon us as to work a thorough reformation amongſt us, it will be very eaſie for him to bring greater Evils upon us.

We have ſeen great and unexpected Revolutions within the ſpace of a few years, and God's hand is not ſhortned ſo as not to be able to cauſe greater ſtill.

How near ſoever we may ſeem to an happy ſettlement, God can blaſt all our counſels, and

hinder what we are so much desirous of from being effected. Or if an happy settlement be made, we must still remember the words of the Text, and that, without God's blessing, it can never be of long continuance.

God's dealings with us have been all along variously chequered with good and evil: First a judgment, then some great mercy; then some other judgment, and then some other great mercy.

We are now under the sense of his loving kindness towards us, and unless it procure some suitable returns from us, some judgment is next to follow, and perhaps a greater than we have ever yet been sensible of.

Let us not then, while it is called to day, harden our hearts, but let God's dealings with us be an engagement to us to break off all our wicked courses for the future.

And since Providence has so ordered matters that many of those things which were the causes of such dissatisfactions and dissentions are wholly removed, let all that heat which was formerly spent about forming of Parties, about quarrelling with and endeavouring to ruine one another, be wholly employed about the more weighty matters of Religion, Judgment and Mercy.

Let

endeavour not only to live Soberly, Righteously, and Godly in this present World: but let it be our greatest contention who shall live most Soberly, most Righteously, most Godly; that so we may engage God to continue his Loving kindness towards us, and to heap all manner of Blessings upon us; and notwithstanding any dangers which may threaten that City, that Kingdom whose welfare we are concerned for, it may however be safe under his Protection, who, if he vouchsafes to keep the City, no real harm can happen to it.

THE END.